CLAIMS

1. A method for conducting electronic commerce, comprising:

electronically visiting, by a customer interested in shopping for an item, a comparison shopping site ("CompShop"), and inquiring about the item and comparative prices thereof;

5   running, by the CompShop, a query on a plurality of electronic stores carrying said item, and asking for a price of the item; and

selectively determining, by at least one of said electronic stores functioning as a "smartStore", an offer price of said item and selectively returning one of a static price and a modified price,

10   said modified price resulting from said at least one of said electronic stores learning the best offer price received by said CompShop from all of said electronic stores.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

returning a standard price by the eStore determined not to be a SmartStore.

15   3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

sending, by the SmartStore, a request to the "CompShop" asking for comparative prices of said item; and

determining, by the SmartStore, whether the asking offer price is the best price that can be offered, wherein if the asking price is determined to be the lowest price, then the SmartStore

20   returns its standard price.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

if the asking price is determined not to be the lowest price, then adjusting, by the

smartStore, the price; and

returning a new price to the "CompShop".

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the at least one of the electronic stores automatically changes

the price depending on a customer for the item asking for the price and what the lowest price is

as recorded by the CompShop.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

maintaining, by the smartStore, a list of comparison shopping sites.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising:

if a request is made from other than a comparison shopping site, then returning by the

smartStore, a standard price; and

if the request for a price is from a comparison shopping site, then submitting by the

smartStore a request to the "CompShop" or another comparison shopping site to get a list of all

comparison prices for the item.
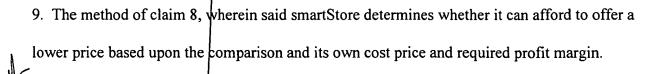
8. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

when said smartStore obtains a comparative list of pricing, determining whether said

smartStore can offer a lowest price.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said smartStore determines whether it can afford to offer a lower price based upon the comparison and its own cost price and required profit margin.
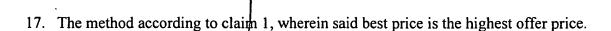
10. The method of claim 9, further comprising:

   if said smartStore can offer a lower price, then returning said lower price to the CompShop request.

11. The method of claim 9, further comprising:

   if said smartStore cannot offer a lower price, then returning its standard price to the CompShop.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

   returning, by the "CompShop", the list of prices to the user.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

   selecting, by the user, based upon the prices received, a choice of electronic store for providing said item.

14. The method according to claim 1, wherein said item comprises a product.

15. The method according to claim 1, wherein said item comprises a service.

16. The method according to claim 1, wherein said best price is the lowest offer price.

17. The method according to claim 1, wherein said best price is the highest offer price.

18. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

      caching, by the CompShop, said prices received from said electronic stores.

19. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

      caching, by the smartStore, a list of prices received from said CompShop.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein said smartStore selectively visits said CompShop such that information from said CompShop is cached by said smartStore for comparison with a price request occurring between visits to said CompShop.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein a price comparison is performed on one of the identical item and a substantially identical item, and

      wherein a graded price is offered on said substantially identical item.

22. A system for conducting electronic commerce between a customer and one of a plurality of electronic stores, comprising:

      a plurality of electronic stores; and

      a comparison shopping site operatively coupled to said plurality of electronic stores and a customer interested in purchasing an item,

      wherein at least one of the electronic stores comprises a smartStore; and

      an electronic medium for linking each of the customer, plurality of electronic stores and

comparison shop together electronically,

wherein said comparison shopping site runs a query on the plurality of electronic stores

and requests an offer price of the item and wherein the smartStore determines a predetermined

offer price of said item from the plurality of electronic stores and selectively returning one of a

5   static price and a modified price,

said modified price resulting from said smartStore learning the lowest offer price received

by said comparison shopping site from all of said electronic stores.

23. A system for performing electronic commerce, comprising:

a comparison shopping site ("CompShop");

10   means for electronically visiting, by a customer interested in shopping for an item, the

comparison shopping site ("CompShop"), and inquiring about the item and comparative prices

thereof;

means for running, by the "CompShop", a query on all of a plurality of electronic stores it

is aware of asking for a price of the item;

15   means for determining, by at least one of said electronic stores, an offer price of said item

and returning one of a static price and a modified price, said modified price resulting from said at

least one of said electronic stores learning the lowest offer price received by said CompShop

from all of said electronic stores.

24. A signal-bearing medium tangibly embodying a program of machine-readable instructions

20   executable by a digital processing apparatus to perform a method of conducting electronic

commerce, said method comprising:

electronically visiting, by a customer interested in shopping for an item, a comparison

shopping site ("CompShop"), and inquiring about the item and comparative prices thereof;

running, by the "CompShop", a query on all a plurality of electronic stores it is aware of

asking for a price of the item; and

5   determining, by at least one of said electronic stores, an offer price of said item and

returning one of a static price and a modified price, said modified price resulting from said at

least one of said electronic stores learning the lowest offer price received by said CompShop

from all of said electronic stores.